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Second report of the Secretary-General pursuant to resolution 2001 (2011)

I. Introduction

1. In paragraph 6 of its resolution 2001 (2011), the Security Council requested a report every four months on the progress made towards the fulfilment of the responsibilities of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI). The present report is the second submitted pursuant to that resolution. It provides an update on the activities of the United Nations in Iraq since my last report, dated 28 November 2011 (S/2011/736). It covers key political developments and regional and international events as well as operational and security matters concerning Iraq.

II. Summary of key political developments pertaining to Iraq

A. Internal developments

2. During the reporting period, tensions rose between the main political blocs in Iraq. Al-Iraqiya suspended its participation in plenary sessions of the Council of Representatives on 17 December, calling for national dialogue and full implementation of the November 2010 Erbil agreement on power-sharing, which had paved the way for the formation of the new Government.

3. Political tensions between the State of Law Coalition and Al-Iraqiya escalated further when the Higher Judicial Council issued an arrest warrant for Vice-President Tariq al-Hashimi, a senior member of Al-Iraqiya, on 19 December on charges related to terrorist activities. As a result, Al-Iraqiya decided to stop attending the meetings of the Council of Ministers. Vice-President Al-Hashimi has denied the charges against him. He has remained in the Kurdistan Region, despite the request from the Ministry of the Interior that the Kurdistan Regional Government hand him over for trial in Baghdad. Vice-President Al-Hashimi made an official request that his trial be moved from Baghdad to Kirkuk or Khanaqin, which was rejected by the judicial authorities. On 22 February, the Higher Judicial Council announced that the trial would start on 3 May.

4. On 27 December, President Jalal Talabani met the Speaker of the Council of Representatives, Usama al-Nujaifi, to discuss political developments. They agreed to convene a national conference of all political blocs, which has gained the consent of all major parties. On 3 January, I issued a statement in which I expressed my

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concern at the rising political tensions and called upon all parties to work together to reach a mutually agreeable solution in accordance with the Constitution of Iraq. A preparatory committee tasked with preparing for the national conference, comprised of senior representatives of the National Alliance, Al-Iraqiya and the Kurdistan Alliance, has been holding regular meetings. The three political blocs have each prepared working papers for discussion within the preparatory committee intended to form the basis of an agenda for the national conference. To date, however, no substantive agreement has been reached on the agenda, date or location of the proposed conference.

5. On 17 January, absentee ministers were barred from signing any orders or running their ministries until they resumed their attendance of Cabinet meetings. Meanwhile, on 29 January, Al-Iraqiya announced its decision to resume its participation in sessions of the Council of Representatives. This is a positive development, as it has enabled an inclusive debate to take place among Iraq's democratically elected legislators on crucial issues, including the 2012 State budget, which was subsequently endorsed by the Council of Representatives on 23 February. On 5 February, Al-Iraqiya further announced its decision to return to the Council of Ministers, thus enabling it to resume its full participation in the institutions of the Government of national partnership.

6. On 12 December, the Governorate Council in Diyala voted to form an autonomous region and submitted a request to the Council of Ministers to initiate the referendum process in accordance with the 2008 Law on the Executive Procedure for the Formation of Regions. Demonstrations in protest of the decision took place in the Governorate, in cities with majority Shiite populations, and demonstrators occupied the Governorate Council building. The Governor and a number of Council members fled to the Kurdistan region and are currently holding Council meetings in the Khanaqin district. Arrest warrants have been issued for some of the Council members. On 27 February, the Governor of Diyala, Abdul Nasser al-Mahdawi, resigned.

7. Following its vote to establish a region on 27 October, the Governorate Council in Salah ad-Din followed an alternative route to forming an autonomous region permissible according to the Constitution. Forms were distributed in the Governorate on 12 January to collect signatures in support of the formation of such a region. The required number of signatures from the electorate was submitted to the Independent High Electoral Commission on 14 February. Neither request has yet been considered by the Council of Ministers.

8. With regard to Kirkuk, on 24 January, the Council of Ministers made recommendations to the Council of Representatives to abolish nine decisions by the former Revolutionary Command Council related to land expropriation in Kirkuk during the former regime and tasked the Shura Council, comprised of senior judges, to prepare a draft law on the cancellation of these decisions. The Council of Ministers also abolished all decisions concerning the cancellation of disposal rights and agricultural contracts for non-Arabs issued by the previous regime. The Governor of Kirkuk, Najimeldin Karim, welcomed the decisions of the Council of Ministers. However, members of the Arab Political Council, a Kirkuk-based Arab political bloc, strongly denounced the decisions, considering them a move towards expelling Arabs from certain areas. The Iraqi Turkmen Front leadership also expressed dissatisfaction with the decisions.

9. The Legal Committee of the Council of Representatives is currently examining a draft law on the cancellation of all decrees, decisions and laws issued by the former regime which had amended the Governorates' administrative boundaries. President Talabani submitted the draft law to the Council of Representatives on 3 November in accordance with article 60 of the Constitution. If the law were adopted, all disputed areas in the country would come under its purview.

10. On 28 December, the Kurdistan Regional Government announced that the next elections for the Governorate Councils in Erbil, Sulaymaniya and Dohuk would be held on 27 September 2012. The opposition parties in Kurdistan, including Gorran, the Kurdistan Islamic Union and the Kurdistan Islamic Group, expressed no objection to the date. On 8 January, the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) announced its decision to enter the Governorate Council elections alone and not in coalition with the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), adding that the two parties had agreed in principle to run in the elections separately.

11. On 18 January, KDP confirmed that Nechirvan Barzani, the Vice-President of the Party and former Prime Minister of the Kurdistan region, would take over the Premiership of the Regional Government from Barham Saleh, in accordance with the 2007 strategic agreement between KDP and PUK. In late January, opposition parties announced their intention not to participate in the next Regional Government.

12. On 15 February, the Kurdistan Parliament elected Arsalan Bayiz (PUK) as its new Speaker and Hassan Mohammed Soor (KDP) as Deputy Speaker. During an extraordinary session of the Kurdistan Parliament on the following day, Nechirvan Barzani was confirmed as Prime Minister of the Kurdistan Regional Government and Imad Ahmed (PUK) was confirmed as Deputy Prime Minister. In both sessions, parliamentarians from the Gorran Party, the Kurdistan Islamic Union and the Kurdistan Islamic Group boycotted the vote. Also, on 16 February, Massoud Barzani, President of the Kurdistan Regional Government, appointed Kosrat Rasul (PUK) as Vice-President, a post that had been unoccupied for the last two years. On 7 March, President Barzani tasked Nechirvan Barzani with forming a new Government within 30 days.

B. Regional and international developments

13. In accordance with the November 2008 status-of-forces agreement between the Governments of Iraq and the United States of America, United States forces completed their withdrawal from Iraq on 18 December. Earlier, on 30 November and 1 December, the Vice-President of the United States, Joseph Biden visited Baghdad, where he had separate meetings with President Talabani, Prime Minister Al-Maliki and Speaker Al-Nujaifi, and attended a meeting of the Joint Iraqi-United States Coordination Committee. On 11 and 12 December, Prime Minister Al-Maliki visited the United States, where he met President Barack Obama to discuss bilateral relations. Both reiterated their commitment to the 2008 Strategic Framework Agreement between the Governments of Iraq and the United States.

14. The Secretary-General of the League of Arab States, Nabil El-Arabi, and his Deputy, Ahmed Ben Helli, visited Baghdad on 8 December and 29 January-1 February, respectively, to review Iraq's preparations for the upcoming summit meeting of the League of Arab States. On 1 February, Hoshyar Zebari, the Minister

for Foreign Affairs of Iraq, and Ambassador Helli jointly announced that the summit would be held in Baghdad on 29 March 2012. The Foreign Minister also announced that the summit would address a broad range of issues, including the political situation in the region.

15. On 14 November, the former Prime Minister of Kuwait, Sheikh Naser Al-Mohammed Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, invited Prime Minister Al-Maliki to visit Kuwait, an invitation subsequently reiterated by the Kuwaiti authorities. In January, the Government of Iraq reaffirmed the Prime Minister's intention to accept the invitation and to visit Kuwait as soon as possible to hold talks with the Government of Kuwait on further normalizing relations between the two countries. The visit was delayed owing to the holding of parliamentary elections in Kuwait on 2 February. Subsequently, on 14 March, Prime Minister Al-Maliki visited Kuwait and met with the Emir, Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, and other senior Kuwaiti officials. The two sides announced a financial settlement of the bilateral issue of Kuwaiti claims against Iraq Airways. They also discussed other bilateral issues. In addition, the two sides discussed Iraq's outstanding Chapter VII obligations pertaining to Kuwait, including on boundary maintenance. Finally, it was agreed that the second meeting of the Joint Ministerial Committee would be held in April 2012 to continue to address all outstanding issues.

16. While the outcome of Prime Minister Al-Maliki's visit to Kuwait is a promising step forward, it remains imperative that Iraq fulfils its long-standing Chapter VII obligations pertaining to Kuwait as quickly as possible. These obligations include Security Council resolutions related to the Iraq-Kuwait boundary maintenance project as well as compensation payments to Iraqi private citizens pursuant to resolution 899 (1994). In addition, my High-level Coordinator for compliance by Iraq with its obligations pursuant to resolution 1284 (1999), Gennady Tarasov, continued his efforts aimed at the implementation of his mandate. He visited New York in December and Kuwait in February to hold consultations with Iraqi and Kuwaiti authorities as well as other relevant stakeholders.

17. On 3 December, Prime Minister Al-Maliki expressed his Government's willingness to mediate between the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic and the opposition with a view to finding a solution to the ongoing situation in the country. The Foreign Affairs Committee of the Council of Representatives subsequently established a special subcommittee comprised of members of various political blocs to follow up on developments in the Syrian Arab Republic and come up with proposals aimed at ending violence in the country. On 8 February, the Ministry of the Interior of Iraq denied reports of Iraqis participating in the violence in the Syrian Arab Republic and of arms smuggling into the country from Iraq. Subsequently, the Government of Iraq increased border patrols along the border.

18. On 3 February, Turkish aircraft struck several suspected positions of the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) in the Kurdistan region of Iraq, close to the border with Turkey, in response to the terrorist activities of PKK inside Turkey. On 11 February, Turkish aircraft again bombed suspected PKK hideouts in the Zap and Hakurk regions near the Iraq-Turkey border. Iraqi local authorities in the area confirmed the air strikes but did not report any casualties.

19. On 21 February, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Iraq announced that Saudi Arabia had nominated its Ambassador to Jordan to also serve as non-resident Ambassador to Iraq, thus becoming the first Ambassador of Saudi Arabia to Iraq since 1990.

III. Activities of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq and the United Nations country team

A. Political activities

20. In response to the political situation in the country, UNAMI intensified its consultations with all political leaders to encourage them to find the common ground that would restore confidence in the political process and reduce tensions. UNAMI has undertaken extensive political facilitation with a broad range of leaders and representatives of the main political parties. In his consultations, my Special Representative delivered four key messages: (a) that any solution should be in accordance with the Constitution; (b) the importance of an open and inclusive dialogue; (c) an appeal to Al-Iraqiya to end its boycott of the Council of Representatives and the Council of Ministers; and (d) the need for transparency in the process and outcome, including a clear mechanism for implementation and follow-up.

21. In conducting its political facilitation and outreach, UNAMI focused in particular on the important role of all Iraqi communities. During the reporting period, my Special Representative met members of the Iraq Minority Council and other representatives of the Christian, Shabak, Yazidi and Sabean Mandean communities, in Baghdad, Kirkuk and Ninewa. The meetings focused on the challenges to these communities' participation in Iraqi political life. UNAMI stands ready to continue supporting the Iraqi authorities in protecting all ethnic and religious components of Iraqi society, and promoting their rights in accordance with the Constitution, including their fair representation in the political system in Iraq. In addition, my Special Representative continued to meet with members of the Council of Representatives to discuss ways and means through which UNAMI could provide technical assistance to key committees. In particular, he met with the head of the Regions and Governorates Committee and the head of the Culture and Media Committee.

22. The Mission's political work also focused on Iraq's unfinished constitutional agenda, including the Federation Council, judicial reform and relevant laws which have yet to be enacted, including article 125 of the Constitution on minorities. A draft law for the establishment of the Federation Council was presented to the Council of Representatives on 21 January. The draft law and the key principles for the establishment of the Council were discussed at a round table convened by the Council of Representatives on 1 February. Participants, including parliamentarians, ministers and academics, discussed the draft law, including the Council's composition, powers and procedures and its institutional relationships with other executive and legislative bodies. At the request of the Council of Representatives, UNAMI provided technical assistance to the round table, including a presentation on international and comparative best practices in upper legislative chambers. The participants agreed on the need for further political dialogue on the establishment of

the Federation Council and requested continued support from UNAMI. The draft law is currently before the Council of Representatives Legal Committee.

23. National reconciliation, including issues related to disputed internal boundaries, remains the central pillar of the Mission's mandate and a top priority, even more so in the light of the withdrawal of the United States forces from Iraq. UNAMI continues to engage with all relevant parties and discuss confidence-building measures as well as possible next steps to address pending issues, such as power-sharing, voter registry review and elections in Kirkuk, negotiations over the situation in Ninewa and property claims. Unfortunately, it has not been possible for the Standing Consultation Mechanism, which is the main inclusive consultative body on issues related to the disputed internal boundaries, to convene a meeting during the reporting period owing to the ongoing political deadlock. The body has not met since mid-2011.

24. In accordance with the Mission's regional mandate, my Special Representative continued to engage with countries of the region to enhance relations between Iraq and its neighbours. On 12 January, he met with the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Jordan, Naser Joudeh. On 16 January, he met with Turkish officials in Ankara. My Special Representative also continues to engage Iraqi and Kuwaiti officials on outstanding issues between the two countries. In that regard, he held regular meetings with the Foreign Minister of Iraq and other senior Iraqi officials.

B. Electoral assistance activities

25. The Council of Representatives has continued the selection of the next board of nine Commissioners of the Independent High Electoral Commission. The term of the current board expires in April 2012. A Committee of Experts, composed of 22 members of the Council of Representatives, was established to assess applications. The Speaker, with broad support from all main political blocs, formally requested UNAMI to participate as an adviser and observer in the process. UNAMI representatives have attended all Committee meetings and advised on selection mechanisms, including the publication of vacancy announcements, evaluation criteria and the processing of complaints. The Committee also took steps, following the recommendation of UNAMI, to allow civil society organizations to observe Committee meetings and to provide regular public updates through press conferences and a dedicated section of the Council of Representatives website.

26. By the deadline of 10 November 2011, the Council of Representatives had received more than 7,300 applications. The Committee divided the initial vetting process into two phases: the first consists in screening applications on the basis of the eligibility criteria stipulated in the Law on the Independent High Electoral Commission, and the second in assessing in more detail the academic, managerial, legal and electoral experience of the applicants. Despite some delays owing to political developments affecting parliamentary sessions, the Committee has continued to work according to the agreed timeline. On 7 February, the Chair of the Committee announced the completion of the first phase of the screening process, during which 4,200 applicants were found eligible. The Chair also made public the criteria for ranking candidates in the second phase and the mechanism for registering complaints. It aims to shortlist the 60 most qualified applicants for interview and final vote by the Council of Representatives by the end of April 2012.

27. The United Nations integrated electoral team, comprising UNAMI, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), working under the overall leadership of UNAMI, continued to provide capacity-building assistance to the Independent High Electoral Commission. Several thematic areas were prioritized on the basis of lessons learned. Selected Commission staff have been undergoing a rigorous training and certification process in order to gain the skills and knowledge needed to develop and maintain the Commission's own software for voter registration and results tabulation. Another group of Commission staff attended a series of training sessions on election reporting and operational data management. Moreover, the United Nations integrated electoral team facilitated the implementation of several institutional capacity-building activities to further improve the Commission's capacity in the areas of graphic design, procurement and public outreach.

28. Following the Kurdistan Regional Government's announcement that Governorate Council elections would be held in the region on 27 September 2012, the Independent High Electoral Commission conducted several planning meetings, with the participation of the United Nations integrated electoral team, to adjust operational timelines in accordance with the election date. UNAMI subsequently encouraged the Commission to clearly delineate roles and responsibilities between its national office and its field offices in the Kurdistan region and to decide on outstanding operational issues in order to allow for timely identification and deployment of United Nations electoral advisers.

C. Human rights activities

Recent developments

29. The number of civilians killed and injured in violent attacks increased during the reporting period. In January, 302 civilians were killed and 931 injured in violent attacks across the country, the highest number of civilian casualties since 2007. Many attacks targeted civilians directly, such as a car bomb on 5 December targeting a religious procession in Hilla, which killed 15 people, including women and children. At least six more civilians were killed in attacks elsewhere in Hilla on the same day. On 22 December, at least 69 people were killed and approximately 200 injured in a coordinated series of bombings across Baghdad. On 4 January, in Baquba, a booby-trapped mobile telephone killed one boy and wounded several others, while another 11 bombs were detonated in the city, killing a six-year old girl and wounding 12 people. On 5 January in Baghdad, two car bombs killed at least 16 people, while in Nassiriya a suicide bomber targeting Shiite pilgrims killed at least 44 people. On 14 January, a suicide bomber in Basra targeted Shiite pilgrims, killing at least 53 people. On the same day, bombs were detonated in Mosul, Tikrit, Baquba and Garma, killing 15. On 27 January, in Baghdad, a suicide bomber targeted a funeral procession, killing at least 31 people and injuring another 60. On 23 February, attacks across Baghdad and other areas of the country left over 62 persons dead and over 200 wounded.

30. From December 2011 to February 2012, there were 80 executions, compared to 68 for January to November 2011. Those executed, most of whom had been convicted under anti-terrorism laws, included one foreign national and at least one woman. UNAMI requested the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Human Rights

and the Higher Judicial Council to provide details concerning individuals executed and the charges on which they had been convicted, but no information has been forthcoming. On 24 January, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights issued a statement expressing concern over trial standards in Iraq and the use of the death penalty, urging the Government of Iraq to suspend its implementation. I also note with concern recent reports of targeted killings of young people, allegedly on account of their look or perception of their sexual orientation. While UNAMI is corroborating these reports, I wish to stress that targeting any individual or group who is exercising its basic human rights and freedoms is a serious crime to be condemned and investigated and it is the duty of the Government to protect those under threat.

31. UNAMI received regular reports of mass arrests under anti-terrorism legislation of individuals accused of being former Baath Party members and of having links to armed opposition groups. Between 20 and 24 November, UNAMI recorded 306 arrests following raids in the Babylon Governorate. Another 300 were reportedly arrested in Diyala Governorate in early December. According to the Higher Judicial Council, by the end of December, more than 842 people had been detained. Reports of arrests continued throughout January and February. UNAMI received allegations from family members that they had not been informed of the place of detention of family members arrested, as well as claims that detainees had been denied access to lawyers and that in some cases they had been forced to sign confessions. The Higher Judicial Council claimed, however, that the investigations were being conducted by investigative judges and general prosecutors in the Central Criminal Court with the presence of lawyers assigned either by the accused themselves or by the courts at public expense. More than 350 of those initially detained were reportedly acquitted of all charges and released by the beginning of January. The remainder are awaiting the outcome of the investigations.

32. The Country Task Force for Monitoring and Reporting on grave violations against children, co-chaired by UNAMI and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), recorded and followed up on 341 incidents in 2011. The majority of the violations documented pertained to recruitment and use of children by armed groups, attacks on schools and hospitals and killing and maiming by improvised explosive devices and complex attacks. Allegations of training and use of children as suicide bombers by Al-Qaeda in Iraq and the Islamic State of Iraq continued to be of particular concern. The Task Force also continued to advocate with the Government of Iraq for the establishment of an inter-ministerial working group to liaise with the United Nations for information-sharing and enhancing a coordinated response to the violations of children's rights. The UNICEF-supported Justice for Children programme continued to support the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs in developing a national child protection policy. On 10 December, the first national conference on justice for children took place in Erbil with representatives from the central and local authorities and civil society organizations. The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs emphasized the Government's commitment to developing a national plan of action on justice for children as a means to improve prevention and protection.

33. UNAMI welcomed the adoption by the Council of Representatives of a number of laws concerning human rights. On 27 December, the Council of Representatives approved a law concerning social welfare for persons living with HIV/AIDS. On 23 January, the Council ratified the Convention on the Rights of

Persons with Disabilities. On 23 February, it established a National Commission for People with Disabilities. Also on 23 February, the Council approved a law concerning trafficking of persons. The law establishes a Higher Commission for Combating Human Trafficking within the Ministry of the Interior, with representatives from the Governorates, ministries and civil society to oversee implementation of the law. Also on 23 February, the Council of Representatives approved the law for Iraq to accede to the Arab Charter of Human Rights adopted by the League of Arab States in 2004. In the Kurdistan region, the Parliament passed on 31 December a law on the Rights and Privileges of Disabled and People with Special Needs, which was ratified by the President of the Regional Government on 26 January.

34. On another positive note, in December, the National Action Plan on Human Rights was formally adopted by the Government. The plan was discussed at a national conference held in Baghdad in June 2011 and attended by a broad range of Iraqi Government, judicial and civil society representatives. In the Kurdistan region, on 10 January, the Kurdistan Regional Action Plan on Human Rights was formally launched in the presence of a number of key ministers, parliamentarians and civil society activists. My Special Representative attended the launching ceremony, during which he congratulated the Government and people of the region for their achievement and for their engagement in the promotion and protection of human rights.

35. In partnership with UNDP, UNAMI continued to support the Committee of Experts appointed by the Council of Representatives to nominate the Board of Commissioners of the Independent High Commission for Human Rights. The Committee has processed over 3,000 applicants and, in February, interviewed a final shortlist of 54 candidates. The Committee is now in the final stage of nominating the 11 commissioners. On 11 March, my Special Representative and the Speaker of the Council of Representatives attended a meeting of the Committee to demonstrate the importance of the selection process.

36. For International Human Rights Day, on 10 December, my Special Representative presented awards to 10 Iraqi human rights defenders for their outstanding work to promote and protect human rights in Iraq. On 17 December, UNAMI, in collaboration with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and in partnership with the Human Rights Committee of the Council of Representatives, held a conference to discuss law and policy reform for enhancing respect for freedom of expression and assembly in Iraq. In December, UNOPS, in partnership with local authorities in 17 Governorates, completed a programme for the protection of detainees and victims of torture for non-governmental organizations and legal and judicial service providers. The programme benefited over 4,600 victims of torture while providing 850 detainees with free legal services. In addition, over 500 prison personnel were trained in prisoners' rights.

Camp New Iraq (formerly Camp Ashraf)

37. In order to prevent violence, which could have resulted from the forcible closure of Camp New Iraq (formerly Camp Ashraf) by the Government of Iraq, UNAMI continued its intensive efforts to find a humanitarian, peaceful and durable solution to the situation of the residents of Camp New Iraq. UNAMI signed a

memorandum of understanding with the Government of Iraq on 25 December providing for the relocation of the residents of Camp New Iraq to a temporary transit location, Camp Hurriya (formerly Camp Liberty), near Baghdad International Airport. Earlier, on 21 December, in response to my request, Prime Minister Al-Maliki extended the deadline for the closure of Camp New Iraq from 31 December 2011 to 30 April 2012.

38. The memorandum of understanding which commits the Government of Iraq to ensuring the safety and security of the residents while in Iraq, respects the sovereignty of Iraq and meets Iraq's international humanitarian and human rights obligations. The Government has diligently mobilized considerable means to prepare the temporary transit location. On 31 January, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) determined that the infrastructure and facilities at Camp Hurriya were in accordance with basic international humanitarian standards, as required by the memorandum of understanding.

39. On 17 February, the first group of 397 residents moved in a peaceful manner from Camp New Iraq to Camp Hurriya under UNAMI monitoring. On 8 March, a second group of 395 residents was peacefully transferred to Camp Hurriya under UNAMI monitoring. Throughout this process, UNAMI, under the leadership of my Special Representative, has continued to act as an impartial facilitator, defusing tensions by addressing a number of provocations and confrontations between the residents and the Iraqi authorities at the embarkation and disembarkation points. This has been a challenging process, particularly as residents have faced difficulties adapting to their new accommodation in Camp Hurriya. The Iraqi authorities, who have demonstrated considerable professionalism and patience, are addressing the humanitarian and logistical concerns of the residents of Camp Hurriya through daily interaction with them on camp management, under United Nations monitoring.

40. UNHCR completed the verification of the first group and has started refugee status determination interviews in accordance with the memorandum of understanding. This is an essential step to prepare the submissions of eligible candidates for resettlement to third countries, an important component of a durable solution. UNHCR will convene a conference of prospective resettlement countries on 23 March in Geneva. In addition, UNHCR, UNAMI and UNOPS are planning to launch a flash appeal to fund activities related to the relocation, monitoring, verification, refugee status determination and search for durable solutions for residents of Camp New Iraq.

D. Technical preparations for the census

41. Together with UNAMI, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) continued to work with the Government of Iraq in support of the planned national census, but there was no progress during the reporting period. UNAMI and UNFPA held discussions with the World Bank to conduct, in the first half of 2012, a large-scale survey of 500,000 households that will provide demographic information while serving as a tool for local-level poverty mapping.

E. Development and humanitarian assistance

42. The United Nations country team continues to support the implementation of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) for 2011-2014 in partnership with the Government of Iraq and in alignment with the National Development Plan for 2010-2014. The Ministry of Planning has initiated a preparatory process for reviewing and updating the National Development Plan to ensure that the development process in the country remains aligned with evolving national priorities. Through the Government's high-level Partnership Committee, the United Nations continued to support the Prime Minister's advisory commission in establishing Government-led thematic working groups to coordinate development programming.

43. To date, the $1.9 billion UNDAF for Iraq is only 32.2 per cent funded, which means a shortfall of approximately $1.3 billion to be mobilized to maintain development momentum in Iraq. The Iraq UNDAF Fund has received contributions of approximately $15 million and needs additional donor funding to support UNDAF implementation. On 18 January, the Fund's steering committee reviewed and approved three development initiatives totalling $8.9 million that will contribute to addressing governance and human rights issues in Iraq.

44. The Government of Iraq has continued to take a responsible role in leading the national development process and has allocated $85 million in the 2012 budget to co-finance projects in partnership with the international community, including United Nations agencies, funds and programmes. Also, the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General/Resident Coordinator/Humanitarian Coordinator formalized a $2.1 million co-financing agreement with the Kurdistan Regional Government on 1 February. In addition, UNDP recently signed a memorandum of understanding with Royal Dutch Shell concerning partnership in socio-economic development activities for local communities in areas where the company operates.

45. At its twelfth meeting, held on 18 January in Baghdad, the Donor Committee of the International Reconstruction Fund Facility for Iraq reviewed the progress of programmes and projects approved under the United Nations Development Group Iraq Trust Fund and reviewed the findings of the Iraq Trust Fund lessons learned Exercise. Of the 200 programmes and projects approved under the Iraq Trust Fund, totalling $1.4 billion, 51 are currently operational and contribute directly to achieving development results within UNDAF.

46. In collaboration with the Central Statistics Organization and the Kurdistan region statistical office, the United Nations country team launched the findings of the Iraq Knowledge Network survey on 3 December in Baghdad. It was the first comprehensive socio-economic household survey conducted in Iraq since 2007. Socio-economic statistics collected from approximately 29,000 households in all 18 Governorates will set a baseline to establish a socio-economic monitoring system for Iraq. This will enhance evidence-based planning at the national, provincial and local levels and enable the Government and partners to monitor and track progress on the Millennium Development Goals.

47. The second phase of the Local Area Development Programme, a joint effort led by UNDP with support from the International Labour Organization, UNOPS, the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), UNICEF and the World Health Organization (WHO), was endorsed by the Government of Iraq on

19 December. The joint programme supports capacity development of local authorities to deliver services with a view to institutionalizing participatory, inclusive, gender-based and integrated planning, budgeting and implementation. Oversight is provided through the establishment of gender advisers in pilot Governorates. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations provided technical support to the Government of Iraq to establish a policy and strategy unit within the Ministry of Agriculture to provide guidance on operational, technical and technological aspects of agriculture, which, in turn, will enable the Government to further promote agricultural reform.

48. UN-Women continued to provide technical support for the integration of gender in the Iraq public sector modernization programme, which is supported by UNDP, the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, UNICEF, UNESCO, UN-Habitat and UNFPA. The intention is to create a gender-responsive and inclusive policy and decision-making environment in Iraq. This includes support for drafting relevant legislation, including a national strategy to advance women's rights and a domestic violence bill, as well as a programme to address violence against women in collaboration with UNFPA and UNHCR.

49. The high proportion of youth in the population poses both a challenge and an opportunity for political, social and economic development in Iraq. In coordination with the Ministry of Youth and Sports, UNFPA is supporting the preparation of a national youth strategy, involving Iraqi youth and their representative organizations, which will be launched during the second half of 2012. UNDP is leading the United Nations country team's support for the preparation of the third national human development report, with a focus on youth, which will be launched in 2013.

50. In January and February, UNESCO, UNICEF and the Government of Iraq conducted four workshops to improve the quality of education at all levels within the framework of the project entitled "Completion of a comprehensive assessment of education sector for Iraq". The workshops, held in Erbil, trained 140 educational statisticians and planners from the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research and universities across the country on qualitative indicators, data collection tools and analytical methods as a means to formulate educational plans focused on improving the quality of education.

51. WHO has supported a range of activities with lasting impacts on the health status of all population groups in the country, including development of institutional and human capacities for effective planning, management and use of data management systems; awareness raising and support for patient safety practices; preparation of technical studies to assess congenital birth defects; and development of an action plan to improve anaesthetic and intensive care services in Iraq. UNICEF, WHO and UNFPA are supporting the Ministry of Health in finalizing the national strategy on reproductive and mother-and-child health. WHO and UNICEF have supported the implementation of the first national micronutrient deficiencies assessment and response survey to review the overall micronutrient status of various population groups.

52. In accordance with the Mission's regional mandate, the UNAMI liaison office in Tehran, established in 2010, has been working closely with the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Government of Iraq to facilitate enhanced exchanges and cooperation on bilateral issues of mutual interest to both Governments, including those related to the environment (combating sandstorms)

and border demining. Most recently, the liaison office facilitated technical consultations through result-oriented missions to Tehran by officials from the United Nations country team.

53. In close coordination with the Government of Iraq and non-governmental organizations, UNHCR continued to support persons of concern under its mandate. According to the Ministry of Displacement and Migration, an estimated 1.3 million people are still displaced within Iraq, among them some 467,565 persons living in 382 settlements on public land or buildings in harsh conditions. Together with UN-Habitat, UNHCR continues to work with the Government to find a durable solution to the problem of displacement through urban planning and land allocation. UNHCR is also liaising with the Ministry and the Council of Representatives Committee on Displacement to try to halt the eviction of displaced families from settlements and to define fair compensation when evictions cannot be delayed.

54. The return of internally displaced and refugee families to their place of origin or to other locations in Iraq has continued. During 2011, 193,610 internally displaced persons and 67,080 refugees were registered with the Government as permanent returnees. To improve returnees' access to protection safety nets, UNHCR has continued to provide legal services, shelters and non-food items across Iraq.

55. The Syrian Arab Republic continues to host the largest number of Iraqi refugees, of whom 101,905 have been registered by UNHCR. My Deputy Special Representative has continued to monitor the situation to ensure the readiness of the United Nations to respond to the needs of any population movements across the Syrian border into Iraq. The country team has developed a contingency plan to address an eventual influx of Syrian refugees or returning Iraqis.

IV. Security and operational issues

56. Although the number of reported attacks has decreased during the reporting period, the overall security situation in Iraq remained tense. The sophistication and impact of recorded attacks are significant, requiring the full attention of the Iraqi security forces, which are striving to strengthen their capacity and advance at a steady pace towards normalization. The risks posed to the United Nations by threats such as abduction, terrorist attack and indirect fire remain high, requiring the Organization to adopt and implement substantial mitigation measures to ensure an adequate level of security for its staff, assets and operations. In this regard, the United Nations has taken proactive steps in the light of the withdrawal of United States forces. Positive cooperation has taken place between the Government of Iraq and the United Nations with regard to the security of United Nations staff, assets and operations.

57. Shortly after UNAMI was established pursuant to Security Council resolution 1500 (2003), the United Nations commenced negotiations with the Government of Iraq on a status-of-mission agreement for UNAMI. Those negotiations were successfully concluded, and an agreement was signed on 3 June 2005. Thereafter, at the request of the Government and in the light of the changed circumstances in the country since then, the United Nations and the Government have been negotiating a new status-of-mission agreement since 2008. During the reporting period, UNAMI

has continued to actively follow up on this issue but, so far, these efforts have not come to a satisfactory conclusion.

58. Despite earlier indications that the United Nations Humanitarian Air Service (UNHAS) had secured funding for one year of operations, UNHAS was forced to cease its operations in Iraq on 9 February owing to the non-materialization of commitments for funding made by donors. With the drawdown of the UNAMI office in Amman and the increased in-country presence of United Nations agencies, funds and programmes, adequate air transport capability is needed to avoid any adverse impact on the implementation of key programmes in support of the Government of Iraq. In this regard, a joint United Nations Headquarters and regional aviation safety team conducted an assessment mission in January to explore options to ensure continued air transport services. Such options include the use of commercial airline services, securing a second fixed-wing aircraft and borrowing an aircraft from another mission.

59. In line with the country team's increased presence in Iraq, the United Nations has enhanced its capacity to accommodate international staff in Baghdad. Discussions are ongoing with the Government of Iraq on the use of its $50 million contribution to the trust fund established for renovation of United Nations integrated compound in Baghdad. Similar projects to expand accommodation capacity for international staff have either taken place or are under way in Erbil, Basra, Baghdad International Airport and Kirkuk. Efforts by UNAMI to ensure self-reliance have included the establishment of contracts for the provision of catering, cleaning and laundry services, short-term provision of fuel and enhancement of perimeter and internal security in all United Nations compounds pending more long-term arrangements. Each regional office has also been provided with armoured vehicles and a level I medical facility.

V. Observations

60. Following the completion of the withdrawal of the United States forces, Iraq has entered a new chapter in its history. Despite the many difficulties along the way, the Iraqi people have been steadfast in their commitment to rebuilding a country that has suffered from decades of war, sanctions and economic decline. Following two national elections as well as the adoption of a Constitution, and the holding of provincial elections, the Iraqi people should be proud of their achievements in building a young democracy in the Arab world.

61. The current political situation, however, underscores the many outstanding issues that have yet to be resolved in order to achieve national reconciliation. I am concerned that if these issues are not addressed in a meaningful way, through an inclusive dialogue, they could lead to renewed political tensions and adversely impact the security situation in the country. I therefore urge the Iraqi political leaders to seize this opportunity and work in a spirit of national unity towards delivering a peaceful and prosperous future for Iraq.

62. In this context, the national conference proposed by President Talabani could provide an important opportunity to bring the current stalemate to an end and set in motion a dialogue that could address outstanding political differences. I urge all concerned to redouble their efforts to make this conference a success and ensure that it is held in a spirit of inclusiveness, compromise and partnership, within the

framework of the Constitution. UNAMI stands ready to lend all the necessary support to such an initiative.

63. I believe that an improvement in issues pertaining to the disputed internal boundaries remains central to Iraq's future stability. However, the current political deadlock is hindering efforts to resolve these and other related issues. I regret that the standing consultative mechanism, which has been a useful forum to bring key stakeholders together to address such issues under the auspices of UNAMI, has been unable to reconvene for the time being. I therefore urge the Iraqi leaders to reaffirm their commitment to resolve pending Arab-Kurdish issues and work together, with the support of UNAMI, to build trust and find common ground.

64. I welcome the progress made in the appointment of a new Board of Commissioners of the Independent High Electoral Commission with a view to the completion of the selection process by April 2012, as stipulated in the electoral law. In that regard, I welcome the steps taken by the Committee of Experts of the Council of Representatives to agree on a set of criteria for evaluating applications and to promote transparency, including through the publication of Committee proceedings and the participation of civil society organizations. I strongly encourage the Iraqi authorities to continue to adhere to a timely, transparent and credible selection process. I would also like to reiterate the commitment of the United Nations to supporting a smooth transition and to provide capacity-building assistance to the Electoral Commission as it embarks on a busy electoral calendar.

65. I am encouraged that Iraq and Kuwait remain committed to normalizing their relations and resolving all outstanding issues. In this regard, I welcome the recent visit by Prime Minister Al-Maliki to Kuwait and the constructive discussions on addressing Iraq's outstanding obligations under relevant Security Council resolutions, as well as bilateral issues. The planned second meeting of the Joint Ministerial Committee in April 2012 is an important opportunity to address all outstanding issues and ensure proper implementation of agreements reached. Iraq's decisive steps to fulfil all its remaining obligations under relevant Security Council resolutions continue to be essential in ensuring Iraq's return to the international standing it held prior to 1990. To this end, the United Nations is committed to providing all the necessary assistance and my Special Representative is ready to facilitate mutually acceptable solutions in this regard.

66. I am pleased by the announcement that the next League of Arab States summit will be held in Baghdad on 29 March. It is an important recognition of the role that Iraq plays in the region. It also underscores how far Iraq has come in reintegrating itself into the Arab world. I would urge member States of the League to use this opportunity to begin a new sustained engagement with Iraq.

67. Notwithstanding the general improvement in the security situation in recent years, I remain concerned by the high level of attacks on civilians, which continue to take place on an almost daily basis. I am also concerned by the continued and increased implementation of the death penalty in the country. I therefore once again urge the Iraqi authorities to establish a moratorium on the use of the death penalty, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 62/149.

68. I welcome recent efforts aimed at strengthening the human rights legislative and institutional framework in Iraq, including the adoption of legislation by the Council of Representatives to ratify the Convention on the Rights of Persons with

Disabilities and the adoption of the National Action Plan on Human Rights. I call upon the Government of Iraq to take further steps to ensure that the fundamental rights and freedoms of all Iraqis are protected. To that end, it is important to establish the Independent High Commission for Human Rights without further delay.

69. I am encouraged that peaceful and orderly transfers from Camp New Iraq to Camp Hurriya have commenced. While I welcome the cooperation of the Government of Iraq and the residents, I would like to remind them of the need to continue to engage in this process in a spirit of goodwill and good faith. I remain concerned by the possibility of escalation and violence, which must be avoided and would be unacceptable. I wish to reiterate that the Government of Iraq bears the primary responsibility for the security of the residents, who must also fully abide by the laws of Iraq.

70. I welcome the beginning of the refugee status determination of the residents of Camp Hurriya, a time-consuming process, and I urge Member States to swiftly offer resettlement opportunities to eligible residents and to continue to support the efforts of UNAMI and UNHCR by providing the necessary financial assistance for the conduct of United Nations activities. It is essential that the three steps, relocation, refugee status determination and resettlement, take place concurrently to achieve a durable solution to this humanitarian issue. The United Nations will continue to lend all the necessary support to this process, pursuant to the memorandum of understanding of 25 December 2011.

71. The Iraqi people are looking to their leaders to do more to address the urgent development challenges that face the country, especially with respect to the delivery of essential services and the repair of infrastructure. In this regard, I welcome the Government's continued commitment to taking a responsible role in leading the national development process. I am particularly appreciative that the authorities have approved an allocation of $85 million in the 2012 budget to co-finance projects in partnership with the international community, including the United Nations agencies, funds and programmes, in furtherance of the implementation of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework for Iraq. I call upon Member States to further contribute to the Fund to foster the implementation of development programmes so crucial to Iraq's future.

72. The high number of displaced persons within Iraq, many of whom are living in harsh conditions, remains a cause for concern. I encourage the Government to continue to work with the United Nations to find a durable solution to the problem of displacement through urban planning and land allocation. I am also concerned that a further deterioration of the situation in the Syrian Arab Republic could have an impact on Iraq and lead to an outflow of refugees or seriously affect the estimated 1 million Iraqi refugees who currently reside in the Syrian Arab Republic.

73. As the United Nations remains fully committed to supporting the Government and the people of Iraq, the continuing absence of a status-of-mission agreement for UNAMI adversely affects the ability of the Mission and the United Nations to carry out their mandated activities. I understand that the Government is very close to completing its internal review of the draft agreement. I urge the Government and the relevant Iraqi authorities to take the necessary steps to ensure that the agreement can be brought into force without further delay.

74. Following the withdrawal of the United States forces from Iraq, the United Nations continues its transition to logistical and security self-reliance. I should like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to the Iraqi security forces for the security support they are providing to the United Nations premises and personnel.

75. Finally, I wish to thank my Special Representative, Martin Kobler, and all United Nations staff serving in Iraq, for their steadfast commitment and dedication to furthering stability and progress in the country.